

DUMBARTON OAKS AND BYZANTINE FIELD WORK*

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I want this evening to look briefly at the past, present, and—insofar as the clouded crystal ball permits—the future of Byzantine field work at Dumbarton Oaks. I shall try not only to give a chronicle of places and people but also to look at some of the factors that have shaped, and will shape, field work policy at Dumbarton Oaks. Two points should be made at the beginning. The first, which is clear from some of the papers already given at this conference, is that the term field work covers more than archaeology in the narrow sense of the term and includes conservation, preservation, photography, aboveground and aerial surveys, and other types of research conducted in the field rather than in libraries. It encompasses the full range of the material remains of the past, which are every bit as valuable, and in some respects more valuable, than the written remains. The second point is that many of the records concerning field work at Dumbarton Oaks are scattered or lost. I have relied for the history of field work at Dumbarton Oaks largely on the archives, which have recently been put in order by Jeff Schlosberg, who also prepared a summary catalogue, but they are far from complete, and I apologize in advance for the inevitable errors and omissions. I checked some points with John Thacher, before his death, and with William MacDonald of Smith, to both of whom I am indebted for help, but I shall welcome any corrections and elucidations.

It is clear from these records that with a few exceptions, which I shall mention later, Dumbarton Oaks had no formal program of field work before 1962. It became involved in field work primarily after the death of Thomas Whittemore in 1950, when it fell heir to the work of the Byzantine Institute. Some of you may remember Whittemore, as I just do. He was an enigmatic and elusive figure, who delighted in covering his tracks, figured in novels by Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, and died in the State Department, on his way to

see the Secretary of State. I am concerned here, however, not with this side of his career, fascinating though it is, but with his role as the father in this country of Byzantine field work, to which he came after an education at Tufts, Harvard, and “reportedly also at Oxford,” according to MacDonald in his article on Whittemore in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. He taught English and later art history at Tufts and worked in Egypt for the Egypt Exploration Society before the First World War, which he spent, principally assisting refugees, in the Balkans and Russia. After the war he did some archaeological work in Bulgaria, and the earliest field work archives at Dumbarton Oaks, which were probably sent there after Whittemore’s death, are of his work with Ivan Velkoff and André Grabar on the basilicas of Messemvria and Golemo Belovo and the Red Church at Tchernena Tcherkva. He was back in Egypt in the mid- and later 20s, working with Alexander Piankoff at Tel el-Amarna and then at Osireion and the so-called Red Sea monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul, of which the field work archives (together with a recently found film on the Red Sea monasteries) are all at Dumbarton Oaks.

In 1930 Whittemore organized the Byzantine Institute, of which the list of sponsors, MacDonald wrote, “reads like an international who’s who of art, aristocracy, and money.” By the time of Whittemore’s death over forty names appeared on the letterhead, including those of John Nicholas Brown, as president, Charles Francis Adams, as treasurer, and, among the sponsors, Robert Woods Bliss. Whittemore was a gifted fund raiser, with the ability to make rich people feel that it was a privilege to support his work. “Whittemore’s message,” wrote MacDonald, “was that Christian art in the Near East, especially in Constantinople, was unknown, utterly magnificent, equal or superior to Western medieval art, and ought to be revealed and understood.” The Byzantine Institute served to channel funds

*This talk is printed essentially as it was delivered at the Boston College Conference on Byzantine Archaeology, on 3 April 1982.

to Whittemore's projects, among which the greatest was in St. Sophia, where he obtained the permission of Atatürk to uncover the mosaics. Dumbarton Oaks has extensive records of his work there, and also at the Kariye Djami, Fethiye Djami, and Fatih Djami, where Ernest Hawkins and Paul Underwood, who was appointed Assistant Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology at Dumbarton Oaks in 1946, worked after the Second World War.

Whittemore's death in 1950 inaugurated a confused and in many respects obscure period in the history of the Byzantine Institute, which had always been a highly personal organization, of which the prime purpose was to fund Whittemore's archaeological projects. Paul Underwood was immediately appointed Field Director in order to provide continuity for the work in Istanbul (where I first met him and Ernest Hawkins, who was working at the Kariye Djami, in the summer of 1950). The Institute continued to sponsor field work in Istanbul throughout the 1950s, and as late as 1963 A. H. S. Megaw reported on work at the Fenari Isa Djami, Zeyrek Djami, Fethiye Djami, and Kariye Djami under the title "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul." Underwood's great work on the Kariye Djami, published in 1966 by the Bollingen Foundation, was subtitled "the publication of an archaeological project of the Byzantine Institute, Inc., of the United States," though Underwood said in the preface that "the responsibilities for the conduct of the technical and scholarly work" were shared with Dumbarton Oaks after 1950. According to Cyril Mango and Hawkins, indeed, the archaeological work of the Byzantine Institute at that time was directed by members of the Dumbarton Oaks staff until the end of 1962, when the Byzantine Institute "ceased operations in the field" or, as Underwood put it, "relinquished the conduct of its field work to Dumbarton Oaks." The financial arrangements during this period were particularly murky. It appears that Dumbarton Oaks paid the salaries of the staff members who were, so to speak, on loan, as Ernst Kitzinger put it, to the Institute, which paid the actual costs of the field work out of the money it continued to raise, not without considerable scrambling, from private individuals and from foundations.

Beginning in 1963, the field work was carried on by Dumbarton Oaks under its own auspices. A committee on field work was formed and chaired by Paul Underwood, until his death in 1968. By this time, however, Dumbarton Oaks was no novice in this area, having worked closely with the Byz-

antine Institute for many years and supported several individual projects, among which pride of place belongs to the survey of St. Sophia begun by Robert Van Nice in 1937 and financed by William Emerson, who also paid for the publication of the first installment. Van Nice came to Dumbarton Oaks in 1949, was appointed Research Associate in 1955, and, after Emerson's death in 1957, moved onto the budget of Dumbarton Oaks. Special mention should also be made of the work on the mosaics in Norman Sicily begun by Kitzinger in the 1940s. Both these projects are still going on and receiving support from Dumbarton Oaks.

The period from the early 60s to the mid-70s can be called the golden age of field work at Dumbarton Oaks, when over twenty field work projects were continued or initiated in Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Tunisia. Six of these were in Istanbul, including both Van Nice's and Whittemore's work in St. Sophia, which continued, though at a slower pace, after his death, and also the projects at the Saraçhane, which started in 1964 under the direction of Martin Harrison and the late Nezih Firatlı, and at the Kalenderhane, where Cecil Lee Striker and Doğan Kuban began work in 1966. The final report on the Saraçhane has now been submitted for publication, and that on the Kalenderhane is expected later this year. Outside Istanbul, work was done at the monastery of St. Abercius in Bythinia by Mango and at the church of St. Nicholas at Demre in Lycia by Hawkins. Mango and Ihor Ševčenko also began work on their corpus of dated Greek inscriptions. No less than seven projects were initiated in Cyprus between 1963, when work on the churches of St. Neophytus and Chrysostomos began, and 1974, when work was resumed at Kourion. David Winfield worked on the frescoes at Lagoudera and Asinou, and Megaw at Kourion and Paphos. In 1970 Dumbarton Oaks participated in the excavations at Bargala in Yugoslavia and in 1971 joined the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in sponsoring the rescue operation at Dibsī Faraj in Syria, directed by Richard Harper.

With a few exceptions, there are records of all these projects in the field work archives at Dumbarton Oaks, in addition to some incidental papers on minor and aborted undertakings. To these should be added Margaret Alexander's work on the mosaics of Tunisia, which has been sponsored by Dumbarton Oaks since 1968 with the help of counterpart funds provided through the Smithsonian Institution, and above all the great project on the

medieval mosaics in San Marco and the north Adriatic region, of which the first fruits are soon to be published by the University of Chicago Press. In recent years several other projects, to which reference has been made in some of the talks at this conference, have also been supported by Dumbarton Oaks, including the field surveys by Martin Harrison in Lycia, Timothy Gregory in Boeotia, and John Koumoulides in Evrytania.

Of these projects, ten are being actively supported or sponsored by Dumbarton Oaks today, either in the field or in the process of preparation for publication, including three in Istanbul, two each in Cyprus and Italy, and one each in Syria, Greece, and Tunisia. At least three others, all in Cyprus, are being more or less actively prepared for publication. Owing to the fact that several large projects are now nearing their conclusion, it has been possible this year for the Senior Fellows in Byzantine Studies to recommend for inclusion in the budget now awaiting approval by the Trustees, modest grants to five new field-work projects, two each in Turkey and Jordan and one in Greece, in addition to support for Wilhelmina Jashemski's project on gardens of the Roman Empire, which is not without interest for Byzantinists. All but one of these are for a specific period of time, and four are supported by other institutions or foundations, including the National Endowment for the Humanities. They are an indication of the continuing commitment to field work at Dumbarton Oaks and of the realization by the Trustees and Senior Fellows of the contribution field work can make to the advance of knowledge in Byzantine studies.

It would be pleasant to leave you on this optimistic note, keeping to myself my concerns for the future. I must turn now, however, to a few sobering, not to say somber, considerations about the present state and future prospects of Byzantine field work. Some of these, as you might expect, are financial. The days of the blockbuster projects, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, are over, at least at Dumbarton Oaks, in view not only of the increasing demands on our resources but also, and more especially, of the clearly stated desire of the founders that most of the income of the endowment should be used for various purposes in the District of Columbia. It is in some ways a pity that the Byzantine Institute, which was devoted to raising money for Byzantine field work from outside sources, was allowed to die, since we must now again search for funds and, for the foreseeable future, return to more modest undertakings. The present

policy, according to the announcement of awards, is that "Dumbarton Oaks is prepared to consider requests for assistance with scholarly projects," which includes field work, but "Preference is given to projects for limited periods of time conducted in cooperation with other institutions." This in fact fits in with my conviction, with which not everyone agrees, that Dumbarton Oaks should back people rather than projects. For, whereas a bad project run by good people may succeed, a good project run by bad people will surely fail. We naturally look for good people with good projects, and I'm glad to say we often find them. All of the best projects at Dumbarton Oaks have been carried out by the people who initiated them, and even the Byzantine Institute, in its heyday, was an extension of the personal vision and activities of Whittemore. Do not look to Dumbarton Oaks in my administration, therefore, to dream up projects and then to commission scholars to carry them out. Such a *modus operandi* may work in some parts of the world, where scholars are accustomed to doing what they are told, but not in western Europe or this country, where a spirit of free enterprise prevails, for better or worse, in the academic as well as the commercial market place and where scholars are accustomed to initiating projects and then to seeking support for them.

This individualistic policy may, and perhaps should, change in time, but at the moment Byzantine field work is faced, in my view, with even more serious problems than those of financing and organization. Five years ago, when I had just been appointed director of Dumbarton Oaks, I referred in an informal talk to the risks of "unbridled archaeology," and I still believe that archaeology should be bridled in at least three ways. First and most important, the inevitable destruction caused by excavation and uncovering must be kept to a minimum. I am often dismayed at the price paid in destroyed evidence in many archaeological undertakings, including some of those supported by the Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks, and I believe that scholars in the future, who will doubtless have more refined methods and techniques than we do, will look on us much as we look on the pioneer excavators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I therefore welcome the trend, of which we have heard some reports today, toward nondestructive field work, especially surveys, inventories, and photographic campaigns recording evidence which is rapidly vanishing with the modernization of archaeologically-rich nations.

Second, the progress of archaeological investi-

gation must be bridled by the obligation to publish. Here the record of Dumbarton Oaks is less good than it should be, and distinctly less good than that of the Byzantine Institute. Only a small fraction of the scholarly results of the field work projects supported or initiated by Dumbarton Oaks in the 1960s and 1970s have appeared in print, though I am hopeful that this situation will soon be improved, since as director of Dumbarton Oaks I have made it one of my prime responsibilities, as some of you in this room know, not always with satisfaction, to press for the publication of the results of field work projects and not to fund a new project before a previous one is finished. There is no doubt in my mind that, whatever the value and importance of each individual project, Dumbarton Oaks bit off more than it could chew in the way of field work in the 60s and 70s and that we, and you, are living with the consequences of this overcommitment. In the future we shall try to keep publication abreast of investigation, and also to make sure that the publications show the broader implications as well as the narrow discoveries of the field work.

Even when the results cannot be fully published, however—and this is the third form of bridling—the research material gathered as the result of field work projects must be made available to scholars. The field work archives at Dumbarton Oaks are open to any qualified researcher, and I hope that some of you will come and dig in our cellars rather than in the field. The records are much fuller for projects undertaken before than after 1960, and the Office of the General Counsel for the University recently prepared a draft statement of policy on sponsored research, which some of you have seen, establishing guidelines for the eventual deposit at Dumbarton Oaks of photographs and similar research materials gathered at its expense in order to assure their availability to scholars, while at the same time making allowance for their exclusive or restricted use for a reasonable period of time by the scholar or scholars responsible for collecting them.

At least some of these concerns are shared by officials and scholars in archaeologically-rich countries, where cultural nationalism is growing and is likely to continue to grow in the foreseeable future. Some nations are considering excluding foreign scholars entirely, or at least reducing the number of archaeological sites available to foreigners. The days of nationalistic organization of archaeology, with each nation having its own school and digs often in competition with other nations,

are surely numbered. We may indeed be approaching a time when western scholars, however competent and disinterested, simply will not be welcome in many parts of the world. There is not a great deal that can be done about this situation, but it suggests to me the wisdom of trying to limit, following the lines I have already discussed, destructive types of archaeology and concentrating on such nondestructive types as surveys and inventories, which may serve the interests of the nations concerned as well as ourselves. One of the principal (and to my mind legitimate) causes of opposition to western archaeologists is that they frequently excavate sites for which they are unable to provide long-range protection, thus opening the way to destruction not only by the elements but also by thieves. When we have to dig, it would be best to concentrate on a few carefully controlled and intensively studied sites than to have a proliferation of new and roughly dug sites.

This type of approach is referred to in the profession (which, like other academic specialities, is not above inventing its own jargon) as minimal impact archaeology and is aimed at getting the most information for the least excavation. Relatively little use has so far been made of scientific techniques in Byzantine archaeology aside from the pioneering work of Peter Kuniholm and Cecil Lee Striker in dendrochronology, and some work on bone analysis. Radiocarbon and other forms of scientific dating, pollen analysis, the study of trace elements in pottery, and other techniques may throw light on many aspects of the Byzantine past. Let us therefore intensify our use of archaeological material. Let us at the same time intensify our use of each site, studying each level on its own, not digging simply with a predetermined interest. The search for cultural change, and its causes, is one of the objectives of the so-called “new archaeology,” which depends upon cooperation between scholars coming from different disciplines (including ethnography and anthropology) and interested in different periods and cultures. It is possible, indeed, that the greatest contribution Dumbarton Oaks could make to Byzantine archaeology would be to put a Byzantinist beside every Ottomanist, Islamist, Hellenist, biblical scholar, and prehistorian digging in the Middle East, in order to make sure that Byzantine material is studied and recorded.

We must break at this point from the tradition of Whittemore and the founders of Byzantine archaeology, who saw it primarily as the handmaiden of the history of art and archaeology. A reviewer

praised the recent book on Qasr al-Hayr East precisely because the authors refused "to allow this excavation to be dominated . . . by the narrow concerns of historians of art and architecture." Stephen Dyson recently chastised classical archaeologists for concentrating too much on traditional goals and for spending too little time "considering the total material world of a specific social unit." A polished bone or grain of fossilized pollen deserves as much attention as was previously paid to an artistic find and may in fact tell us more about the culture and age from which it comes. Archaeology can throw light on every aspect of the past. It bridges the gap not only between "history" and "prehistory" but also between the land and the lab, by forcing mute unwritten materials of all kinds to tell their story. It has been described as a "watchful pragmatist," checking from all types of historical sources the conclusions drawn from one type only. It is thus quintessentially interdisciplinary in both its aims and its techniques. It is the responsibility of Dumbarton Oaks to see that archaeology makes its proper contribution to Byzantine studies, yet in such a way that we do not prevent future scholars from going over the same ground with new and yet more refined techniques, and thus reaching their own conclusions.

Parallel to this concern for preservation is the feeling of people in many archaeologically-rich countries that their monuments belong to and should be studied by themselves and that they have been exploited by foreign scholars. Personally, I feel that there is some justice in the charge of intellectual colonialism, which in its own way is no less pernicious than political and economic colonialism, since it involves foreigners using a cultural heritage for their own purposes without regard for the interests of the country concerned. The removal of information may be no less serious than the removal of objects, and any number of western scholars have built their reputations and careers in their own countries on the basis of field work of which the records and evidence have been taken from the country where the work was done. The only way I can see of dealing with this situation is cooperation. While I should admit that my years at Dumbarton Oaks have made me a bit leery of cooperative projects, which often founder on personal and scholarly disagreements, I am all the more convinced of the need for cooperation, especially in field work, both among scholars in various disciplines and with scholars in the countries where the work is being done. This will not work well,

however, until there is a group of researchers in each country who know and trust western scholars and are prepared to work with them for common ends. The policy of cooperation must therefore be accompanied by a long-range program not only of sending scholars from here to the archaeologically-rich countries but also of bringing scholars from those countries to universities and research institutes in this country and in Europe. Over the years it should prove possible, as it has in other fields of research, to create a group of researchers who share common goals and are prepared to work with each other in order to advance knowledge. Dumbarton Oaks has embarked on a course of seeking fellows from archaeologically-rich countries, in the hope both of promoting research there and of creating the personal ties and confidence on which cooperative work can be based.

My conclusion is therefore one of restrained optimism. The restraint is imposed by a sense of the problems, which are less financial than intellectual and political, facing archaeology today. The optimism flows from the conviction that the proper study of material remains will open many doors to our understanding of the Byzantine past. Field work is alive and well at Dumbarton Oaks, though of a different type than prevailed earlier, especially in the palmy days of the 60s and 70s. Not only is it reduced in scale, but it is more varied in scope and aim, corresponding to the research interests of individual scholars rather than to predetermined institutional goals. It is increasingly linked to an effort to realize a full range of information about the "total culture" of the past, both its continuity and its change, and is directed toward a future of active cooperation among scholars from various academic fields and different nations. The future of Byzantine field work, in my view, depends as much upon these educational goals as it does upon the more immediate objectives of identifying promising projects and raising necessary funds, and it is the responsibility of Dumbarton Oaks, and of the university with which it is affiliated, to keep these long-range objectives in mind as it plans now both for the present and for the future.

Dumbarton Oaks

Bibliographical Note

In addition to the field work archives at Dumbarton Oaks and published works cited in the text, I have relied in the preparation of this paper on the field work re-

ports published in the *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, from which all quotations are taken if not otherwise specified. Andrew Watson's review of *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East*, by Oleg Grabar and others, was published in *Speculum*, LVII (1982), 128–31. The references to the “new archaeology” and the lack of concern for the “total culture” of the past are from articles by Jeremy Sabloff, Stephen Dyson, and William Dever in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 242 (Spring, 1981).

The whereabouts of the papers of Thomas Whittemore, if they still exist, is something of a puzzle. The library which he gathered in Paris is now at the Collège de France, and the records of his field work are mostly at Dumbarton Oaks, together with some material relating to the Byzantine Institute, about two hundred letters (deposited by his great-grandniece) written to Whitte-

more in the 1890s, and some miscellaneous material relating to his career at Tufts and in the early twentieth century, including a number of play bills. His personal papers have disappeared, however, and all efforts to trace them have so far failed. According to MacDonald in his article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, “Whittemore's papers, including voluminous correspondence and some diaries, are in the library of the Byzantine Inst., now part of the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris.” MacDonald saw them there and took some extracts from them, but according to Professors Paul Lemerle and Gilbert Dagron they are not now with the library at the Collège de France. If any reader of this article knows where all or any of them are, word of them would be appreciated.